

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

TWO NEW SOUTH AMERICAN SNAKES.

BY E. R. DUNN.

While going over some of the South American snakes in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, I happened upon two which seem as yet undescribed. As will be apparent their generic assignments are rather a problem, although their direct specific relations are easily determined.

Dromicus amazonicus, sp. n.

Type.—M. C. Z., No. 2820, Santarem, Brazil.

Scales 17; ventrals 152, anal divided; caudals 75. Eight upper labials, 4th and 5th entering eye; loreal longer than high; one pre- and two postoculars; temporals 1-2; internasals as long as broad, frontal longer than its distance from tip of snout, shorter than the parietals; latter longer than their distance from the internasals; anterior chin shields longer than posterior; olive brown above, white below and on the first two scale rows; dark spots on some of the scales of the 7th and 8th rows, forming two dorsal dark lines which disappear on the tail; upper labials and throat white with dark mottlings; a pair of white spots on the nape. Total length 250 mm., tail 55 mm.

Apparently allied to *Rhadinea binotata*, Werner, also from Brazil, but *binotata* has the posterior chin shields longer; a dark stripe between the two light flecks on the neck; and the sides, inclusive of the ends of the ventrals, are olive green.

Van Denburgh (1912 Proc. California Acad. Sci. (4) 1 p. 327) has pointed out the comparative uselessness of the scale pits for defining genera in this group of snakes. It then becomes exceedingly doubtful whether *Rhadinea*, *Aporophis*, *Leimadophis* (*Liophis*) and *Dromicus* (*Alsophis*), can be maintained as separate genera. There are doubtless several natural groups within this mass of some 110 snakes, but until better characters are found it is at least unsafe to describe a snake in one of these genera without carefully considering the species of the others. *Dromicus* is the oldest tenable name and is not preoccupied by *Dromica*.

As examples of the danger of trusting too readily to the generic divisions in this group it is worth while to mention—

(1) *Aporophis melanocephalus* Griffin (1917 Mem. Carnegie Mus. vii, 3, p. 171) which is clearly a synonym of *Rhadinea steinbachi* Boulenger (1905, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist. (7) xv, p. 454), both snakes coming from Bolivia and both collected by the same man.

(2) *Liophis atahuallpae* Steindachner (1901 Anz. Ak. Wiss. Wien, p. 195) from Ecuador is, according to Boulenger in the Zool. Rec. for 1901, a synonym of *Rhadinea undulata* Wied (1825 Beitr. Nat. Bras. I, p. 329).

***Tachymenis surinamensis*, sp. n.**

Type.—M. C. Z., No. 5123, Surinam.

Ventrals 196, anal divided; caudals 98; scales 19; total length 417 mm.; tail 113 mm.; eight upper labials, 4th and 5th entering eye; one pre- and two postoculars; temporals 1-1; frontal very long and narrow, no broader than supraocular, longer than parietals, much longer than its distance from tip of snout; loreal longer than high. Color, (faded) very light above and below; a black dot on end of each ventral and one at tip of each scale in row one; second, third and fourth scale rows rather peppered with tiny black specks; a black dot on about every third scale in row four, larger black dots on about every third scale in row eight, on the neck these last fuse in pairs across median line and there is an elongate dark blotch on the middle five scale rows just back of the parietals; a light, dark bordered line along the frontal; a dark band from nostril through eye continuous with the slightly darker scale rows 2, 3 and 4; behind the eye on the labials this line bordered with black below; a dark spot below eye on fifth upper labial; lower labials and throat sprinkled with darker.

A second specimen with same data has ventrals 200, anal divided, caudals 89, total length 300 mm.; tail 75 mm. The upper series of dots on the back is on the seventh row; the marking on the frontal is not visible and the subocular streak extends from eye nearly to lip across fifth and sixth labial.

Related to *Tachymenis elongata* Despax from Peru. But *elongata* has scale pits; the parietal is as long as the frontal; the temporals are 1-2 and the coloration, while generally similar, differs in detail.

I am in some doubt as to whether the generic assignment of this snake is correct. It agrees with *Coniophanes* in the absence of scale pits and in the round pupil, but it is evidently closely allied to *Tachymenis elongata*. It is somewhat doubtful whether *Coniophanes* and *Tachymenis* can be kept apart. *Tachymenis* is the older name.